

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 INR-11 RSC-01 /034 R

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P 182101Z SEP 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 205567

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AWRD, PFOR, MARR, TH

SUBJECT: DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL FOR ACM THAWI

REF: COMUSMACTHAI 090155Z SEPT 74

1. WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO EXPEDITE APPROVAL OF PROPOSED AWARD OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL FOR ACM THAWI IN ORDER TO ALLOW PRESENTATION BY DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS DURING LATTER'S UPCOMING VISIT TO BANGKOK. WE HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF MR. CLEMENTS PRESENTING THIS AWARD TO THAWI, WITH SOME PUBLICITY TO BE EXPECTED, ON THE EVE OF THAWI'S RETIREMENT AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN WHICH THAWI MAY PROMINENTLY FIGURE. MORE GENERALLY, WE FEAR THE PROPOSED PRESENTATION MIGHT BE VIEWED BY SOME THAI AS A SYMBOL OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY AT A TIME WHEN OUR PAST ATTITUDES TOWARD AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR OLD MILITARY FRIENDS ARE UNDER STRONG CRITICISM FROM CERTAIN QUARTERS. WE HAVE THEREFORE ASKED DOD TO DEFER PRESENTATION UNTIL WE HAVE HAD TIME TO REVIEW THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR REASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED AWARD AND YOUR ADVICE ON TIMING OF THE PRESENTATION IF IT IS APPROVED.

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2. WHATEVER YOUR VIEWS ON THE TIMING OF THE AWARD, AND ON

GIVING THE AWARD AT ALL, WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DISCUSS
CONTENT AND CLASSIFICATION OF REFTEL WITH MACTHAI. WE

UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS STANDARD PRACTICE TO CLASSIFY BACK-
GROUND MATERIALS FOR SUCH AWARDS AS THIS CONFIDENTIAL IN
ORDER BOTH TO PREVENT PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF THE PROPOSED
AWARD AND TO ALLOW FRANK DISCUSSION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES,
WHICH NOT INFREQUENTLY ARE OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL
SENSITIVITY, SURROUNDING THE PROPOSAL. IN THIS PARTI-
CULAR INSTANCE WE BELIEVE IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO PRECLUDE
PREMATURE DISCLOSURE AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO PREVENT OUR
IN-HOUSE JUSTIFICATION OF THE AWARD FROM FALLING INTO THE
HANDS OF INDIVIDUALS UNFRIENDLY TO US AND/OR THAWI. THE
"NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION" DISCUSSES ASPECTS OF OUR BILATERAL
RELATIONS WITH THAILAND WHICH ARE SENSITIVE IN NATURE AND
DRAWS CONCLUSIONS WITH WHICH WE DO NOT NECESSARILY AGREE.
IN CERTAIN INSTANCES IT IS ALSO INACCURATE (E.G., THAWI
DID NOT BECOME DEFENSE MINISTER IN 1969). WE THEREFORE
HOPE THAT MACTHAI CAN NOTIFY ALL THE ADDRESSEES THE
MESSAGE SHOULD BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

3. IF YOU DO FAVOR PRESENTATION OF THE AWARD AT SOME
POINT, WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE CITATION BE MODIFIED SO
AS TO PORTRAY THAWI IN A MANNER MORE LIKELY TO BE
APPRECIATED BY THE THAI. WE DO NOT BELIEVE LANGUAGE SUCH
AS "HIS FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP AND EXCEPTIONAL DIPLOMATIC
ACCOMPLISHMENTS HAVE ENABLE THE UNITED STATES TO ESTABLISH
AND MAINTAIN A SUCCESSFUL PRESENCE, AND TO CONDUCT THE
MOST INTENSIVE AIR OPERATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST
ASIA WITH THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT"
AND THAWI'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS "CULMINATE A LONG AND DISTIN-
GUISHED CAREER OF ASSISTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA" IS WELL-CALCULATED TO BE FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY THE
THAI OR EVEN THAWI HIMSELF. REQUEST YOUR COMMENTS. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, HONOR AWARDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE205567
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JBDXTER:VLTOMSETH:LRR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740262-0072
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740934/aaaabcvo.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: COMUSMACTHAI 090155Z SEPT 74
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13-Aug-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <04 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL FOR ACM THAWI
TAGS: AWRD, PFOR, MARR, TH, US, (THAWI CHUNLASAP)
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005